

# SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

## Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee

### Meeting held 9 November 2017

**PRESENT:** Councillors Chris Peace (Chair), Penny Baker (Deputy Chair), Michelle Cook, Richard Crowther, Dawn Dale, Terry Fox, George Lindars-Hammond, Magid Magid, Karen McGowan, Zahira Naz, Joe Otten, Zoe Sykes, John Booker (Substitute Member) and Andy Nash (Substitute Member)

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#### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

1.1 Apologies for absence, together with their nominated substitutes, were received as follows:-

Apology

Councillor Sue Auckland  
Councillor Keith Davis  
Councillor Mark Jones

Substitute

Councillor Andy Nash  
Councillor John Booker  
No substitute nominated

#### **2. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

2.1 No items were identified where resolutions may be moved to exclude the public and press.

#### **3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

#### **4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

4.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 14<sup>th</sup> September 2017, were approved as a correct record and, arising from their consideration it was noted that, in relation to paragraph 6.7(c)(i) (Challenge for Change – The Quality of Rehousing Services), matters were ongoing and would be followed through.

#### **5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS**

5.1 In relation to two public questions received from Andy Shallice, relating to the regeneration of the Gleadless Valley Estate, the Chair, Councillor Chris Peace, indicated that these had been forwarded to the Cabinet Member for Planning and Development and that a written answer would be provided.

#### **6. STREET CULTURE**

6.1 The Committee received a report of the Policy and Improvement Officer on Street Culture, together with a briefing paper from the Community Safety Partnership on

what street culture was and services in Sheffield, and a report of the Executive Director, Place, on rough sleeping in Sheffield. It also made reference to the petition discussed at the meeting of the Council held on 6 September requesting the provision of a Night Café for the Homeless and Vulnerable, which Council had asked the Committee to consider as part of its discussions on rough sleeping.

6.2 In attendance for this item were Councillor Tony Downing (Cabinet Adviser for Neighbourhoods and Community Safety), Maxine Stavrianakos (Head of Neighbourhood Intervention and Tenant Support), Suzanne Allen (Head of Citywide Neighbourhood Services), Tracey Ford (Sheffield Drug and Alcohol Co-ordination Team), Superintendent Paul McCurry (South Yorkshire Police), Tim Renshaw (Cathedral Archer Project), Guy Biggin (Supervisor, City Centre Ambassadors), Sam Lloyd, Jason Marriott and Dave Smith (Framework Sheffield Street Outreach Team), Bobbie Walker (Street Pastor/Soup Kitchen), and Peter Sephton (Sheffield City Centre Residents' Action Group).

6.3 Each of the attendees addressed the Committee as follows:-

- Councillor Tony Downing emphasised that ending rough sleeping was a priority for the Council and that it was working with partners to provide a robust and holistic response to the issue of homelessness.
- Maxine Stavrianakos stated that she and Superintendent Paul McCurry worked together on the Performance, Planning and Resources Group which undertook work on street begging, particularly in relation to the provision of help and support. She added that a support and enforcement based approach had been adopted. Superintendent Paul McCurry highlighted the importance of partnership working and also referred to the issue of organised begging which, it was thought, could have organised crime behind it.
- Tracey Ford made reference to the operation of a multi-agency group which took account of the fact that more than one agency may be working with the same person. It considered vulnerability to be an important issue and also reflected individuals' relationships with particular workers. An enforcement group, which was a partnership between the City Council and South Yorkshire Police, also met with the aim of identifying individuals who were not engaging with services. In addition, feedback from a communications campaign on begging had led to the formation of the Help Us Help website which encouraged the public to contribute to appropriate charities. The Help Us Help campaign was being further developed by the hosting of a cabin at the Christmas Market between 30<sup>th</sup> November and 6<sup>th</sup> December 2017, which would promote the website and partnership working.
- Suzanne Allen directed the Committee to the circulated report on rough sleeping in Sheffield and indicated that the Council was committed to ending this in the City by means of support in crisis situations and prevention of rough sleeping. In doing this, it was necessary to understand people's complexities, with housing alone not being enough. It should be noted that Sheffield did not have the high level of rough sleepers as other cities, with

there being only around 20 people who slept rough on a fairly regular basis. The issue was how to support these people with tailored responses and also identifying those at risk of becoming rough sleepers. Members should also be aware of the creation of the post of Rough Sleeping Development Manager who operated over the four authorities in the sub-region.

- Jason Marriott informed the Committee that Framework had been operating for four months and sought to engage with rough sleepers, particularly in the early hours. It worked with people until they were accommodated, monitored numbers and identified any gaps in the service. He considered that there was good partnership working in Sheffield, with begging being an important issue, it having a bearing on people's perception of homelessness, and possibly being a cause of homelessness in that individuals disengaged from support as they had access to money. Sam Lloyd highlighted the importance of preventative work on begging and commended the Help Us Help campaign.
- Tim Renshaw explained that the Archer Project was a day facility which engaged in collaborative work and involved other agencies to ensure that people had access to good advice. Particular emphasis was placed on those who were viewed as being outside the system and developing an understanding of what it was like to be on the street. The project also had an interest in newer developments such as mental health issues and sought to identify what people could achieve. Furthermore, the project was looking to build relationships through recovery groups, learning and participation, with the aim that some individuals might become volunteers or even gain employment. Steps were also being made to build links with the private and creative sectors.
- Peter Sephton presented the City Centre Residents' viewpoint, highlighting anti-social behaviour issues associated with street drinkers, beggars and rough sleepers. He felt that people were falling between the cracks in the support services provided and that the problem was growing. Members were also informed that the staff of businesses in the West Street/Devonshire Green area were frightened to leave their places of work and that his Group had collected statements with a view to encouraging the Council's Licensing Committee to adopt a cumulative impact policy in that area. He also welcomed attempts to discourage students from giving to beggars.
- Bobbie Walker stated that the Soup Kitchen had started 30 years ago and had been given a base by the Council. Between 30 and 40 people used it each evening and it had proved an important means of getting to know people, signposting them to the appropriate services and finding people a bed if they did not have one. In addition, a Christmas dinner was also now provided and, where people were moving on, she continued to work with them. She commended the work of the Help Us Help campaign and also highlighted the many issues involved, such as mental health.
- Guy Biggin explained that the City Centre Ambassadors, of which there were

13, patrolled every day between 7.30 am and 8.00 pm, and in one year there had been approximately 5,000 interventions with beggars on the streets of Sheffield. The Ambassadors would provide signposting services and also pass on intelligence to the relevant support agencies.

6.4 Members made various comments and asked a number of questions, to which responses were provided as follows:-

- It was recognised that there was a need to do something different in relation to the large number of users of Class A drugs in South Yorkshire and the Police were working on this with the rehabilitation organisations. It was hoped that the reintroduction of neighbourhood policing, co-ordinated with the work of the City Centre Ambassadors, would help the situation. A dedicated neighbourhood team would be based in the Broomhall area from 15th January 2018, which it was hoped would be based in community accommodation. Spice users had become a problem in the City and the Archer Project was working with the local policing teams to address this issue.
- The majority of referrals to Framework, were through the Freephone number and from concerned members of the public.
- The agencies linked together through the Community Safety Partnership, which included the Council, South Yorkshire Police and representatives of the Students' Unions.
- The Help Us Help leaflet and business card had been updated so that it contained the Framework contact number.
- The Drug and Alcohol Co-ordination Team had a list of treatment and support services available and some good outcomes were included in the case studies on its website.
- Students informed the Help Us Help campaign and lectures had been given at the University of Sheffield, together with research to assess any change of perceptions in relation to giving money to beggars. Furthermore, the Sheffield City Centre Residents' Action Group included representatives from both of the City's Universities. It should also be noted that Sheffield was the only city where Council officers went into student accommodation.
- It would be worthwhile for Members to attend the Drug and Alcohol Co-ordination Team's Recovery Awards.
- Agencies operated around individuals and case conferences could be organised.
- In relation to homelessness, it was necessary to assess each individual's situation and circumstances and determine whether they complied with the definition of statutory homelessness. In any event, officers would give advice on the options available and always try to prevent people becoming

homeless. There were projects to assist those on low income to get into housing and a gateway to supported housing and there may be cases of illegal eviction. The advice given would depend on the individual circumstances and, depending on the situation, efforts would be made to see if emergency accommodation was available or people could use their friends and family. There was also an out of hours service available for those finding themselves homeless at short notice.

- Health partners were involved in all partnership working and the involvement of mental health workers was being considered.
- Housing+ staff visited people in the tenancies and could pick up any issues. These staff had been trained to signpost tenants before any potential eviction.
- The Council worked with registered providers of social housing, which all had a similar commitment to preventing homelessness.
- In considering the provision of a Night Café for the homeless and vulnerable, it should be borne in mind that one single place might not be effective due to the considerable mental health issues and complex relationships of those living on the streets. It was acknowledged that a Night Café might be a solution, but it was important for people to be able to access services in a safe place. It should also be noted that other cities had found such facilities difficult to manage and it was felt that the provision of a Night Café would not address the fundamental issues involved. There was also a need to take action to protect the night-time economy to ensure that people were protected in the City Centre.
- St. Wilfrid's Place was a new development which provided support for the homeless. It took referrals but did not necessarily cater for rough sleepers.
- Funding for the Help Us Help campaign had been provided by the Business Improvement District and the Performance, Planning and Resources Group and it was hoped that further funding could be provided from the City Ward's Locality Funding Pot, but more funding was required. If further funding was obtained, the Drug and Alcohol Co-ordination Team could consider the provision of one day a month work time for communications.
- Many organisations were involved in dealing with the issues raised by homelessness and rough sleeping and the Salvation Army was just one of them. The report presented just a flavour of the key agencies.
- Work was being undertaken with the domestic abuse services, with refuge provision being upgraded and a new strategy in development.
- The increase in rough sleeping could be related to austerity and begging, but a trend reversal was foreseeable. It was also possible that the introduction of Universal Credit may increase rough sleeping and further work was required relating to the complex needs of the individuals involved.

- The Council would keep its ambition to have no-one sleeping rough on Sheffield's streets, but there was no guarantee that it would never be seen again. It was important though to ensure that the Council had done everything it could to give people some choice.
- The priority areas in the Homeless Prevention Strategy related to prevention, vulnerability, rough sleeping, access to employment, education and training and health. It also encompassed action on the Homelessness Reduction Act and the discussions on the Strategy very much reflected customer feedback.

6.5 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) thanks those attending for their contribution to the meeting;
- (b) notes the contents of the report, comments made and responses to questions;
- (c) approves the setting up of a Working Group comprising six to eight Committee Members to consider the issues involved around Street Culture and report back to the Committee;
- (d) having heard testimony from a range of experts in the field of homelessness, recommends that the excellent work by different agencies, including Help Us Help, be given the opportunity to develop further before the idea of a Night Café be considered and, whilst commending the intentions behind this idea, notes the concerns about its safety expressed by some contributors; and
- (e) requests that:-
  - (i) the Cabinet Member for Finance be asked to consider the provision of some communication support for the Help Us Help campaign; and
  - (ii) details of the Drug and Alcohol Co-ordination Team's Recovery Awards be sent to the Policy and Improvement Officer for circulation to Committee Members.

**7. DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME 2017-18**

7.1 The Committee received a report of the Policy and Improvement Officer, attaching the Committee's Work Programme for 2017/18 for Members' consideration.

7.2 RESOLVED: That the Committee approves the contents of the Work Programme 2017/18, subject to the inclusion of the report of the Street Culture Working Group for the Committee's meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2018.

**8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

8.1 It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on Thursday,

14<sup>th</sup> December 2017, at 4.45 pm, in the Town Hall.